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# Town of Berlin

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## Department of Economic Development

February 23, 2023

Commerce Committee

RE: Bill 1042 - An Act Authorizing the Department of Economic and Community Development to Provide Capacity Building Grants to Connecticut Brownfield Land Banks

Senator Hartley, Representative Meskers; Ranking Members Senator Martin, Representative Harrison; Representative Fazzino, Senator Rahman and distinguished Members of the Commerce Committee:

I am the Economic Development Director for the Town of Berlin, and am speaking today concerning Senate Bill 1042. In addition, I am on the Board of the Regional Brownfield Partnership and the Connecticut Brownfield Land Bank. Land Banks were put into legislation for the purposes of acquiring, retaining, remediating and selling brownfields in the state for the benefit of municipalities; educating government officials, community leaders, economic development agencies and nonprofit organizations on best practices for redeveloping brownfields; and engaging in all other activities in accordance with the Land Bank legislation.

Normally, a property that a Brownfield Land Bank takes on is one that neither the private nor public sector can see a cost-effective solution that either is willing to take on. For instance, if a property is a brownfield, and has \$100,000 or more owed in back taxes, the likelihood of a buyer coming up to buy it, take on the tax debt and develop it without knowing what the situation is care of contamination. A brownfield land bank has the statutory ability to take on this property, to apply for and receive grants to do environmental testing. This step, done through the non-profit land bank, can help to give potential buyers as well as the community to better understand the nature of the contamination.

The land bank gives a developer and the town an avenue so that neither is part of the chain of title. Once a property owner (or town) is in the chain of title, it can cause some issues from being sued as well as potentially being liable to do a costly clean up a site.

Bill 1042 will allow Brownfield Land Banks to acquire State grant funds to pay for operational expenses and thus allow for the ability to increase the support they provide to our State. The creation of brownfield land banks was not just monumental, but very forward-thinking. This bill takes another step forward in helping to take the most challenging sites in Connecticut and helping to bring them back into viable (and taxable) use.

I would ask that you move this bill along as Brownfield Land Banks can be a vital and sometimes the last possible answer to municipalities and developers who have all but given up on contaminated properties.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Christopher D. Edge  
Economic Development Director

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